

Office of the White House Press Secretary  
(Tucson, Arizona)

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THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESS SECRETARY  
ON THE AGREEMENT CONCERNING  
SOVIET EMIGRATION AND THE TRADE BILL

The President would like to clarify one point regarding assurances on emigration as related in the exchange of letters published by Senator Jackson on October 18, a point which appears to have been widely misunderstood.

All the assurances we have received from the Soviet Union are contained in the letter from the Secretary of State to Senator Jackson. This letter, as I am sure you have already noted, does not contain specific numbers. Rather, it sets forth the principles to be applied in handling applications and visas of those wishing to emigrate.

The Senator, in his reply to the letter of the Secretary of State, set forth certain guidelines or understandings which he proposes to apply in the renewal when the President's waiver authority is considered by the Congress. With respect to these guidelines or understandings in the Senator's letter, the Administration has agreed only that, as stated in the Secretary's letter, they "will be among considerations to be applied by the President" in exercising authority provided for in the Trade Bill.

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ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT FORD  
TO THE  
AMERICAN CONFERENCE ON TRADE  
DECEMBER 3, 1974

Let me use one other fact, if I might. I can assure you from my recent experiences that the Soviets are not sitting back. They are not looking for a seat as a spectator. They want and they will get part of the action.

The Soviets are ready to trade—politically, economically—but it will take time. It will take negotiation on the one hand, some very hard bargaining on the other. We have made a good beginning politically, a breakthrough on controlling the latest generation of nuclear weapons, a breakthrough for peace. Let us make the same breakthrough for trade essential for détente and progress around the world.

In 1973, the United States achieved a trade surplus of more than \$1 billion from the Soviet Union. Another \$900 million surplus came from other Communist countries around the world. Trade with these nations was, therefore, a very crucial factor in our overall trade surplus of \$1.7 [\$1.3] billion in 1973.

The Soviets will not deal unless we work to achieve mutually beneficial economic policies, including the elimination of discrimination against their trade, and unless we are willing to provide appropriate levels of credit within the framework established by the Congress.

Let's be very clear about this. Our competitive trading partners of Western Europe and Japan are issuing credits to Communist countries with which they are now trading. Their record shows that the Soviet credit is good. The credits we issue are small compared to our Western trading partners.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

DECEMBER 3, 1974

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The Emigration Issue

Mr. Chairman, you have asked me to return to your committee to comment specifically on the emigration issue as it relates to title IV of the trade bill, a problem dealt with in the Jackson-Vanik amendment to title IV.

Let me state at the outset that I deal with this matter with considerable misgiving because what is said on this occasion could, if not handled with utmost care, deal a serious setback both to the cause of freer emigration from the U.S.S.R. and to the more hopeful trend in U.S.-Soviet relations that has been maintained for the last few years and was recently strengthened in the President's meeting with Mr. Brezhnev [Leonid I. Brezhnev, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union] in Vladivostok.

As you are well aware, the administration since the beginning of détente had been making quiet representations on the issue of emigration. We were never indifferent to, nor did we condone, restrictions placed on emigration. We understood the concerns of those private American groups that expressed their views on this troubling subject. We believed, based on repeated Soviet statements and experience, that making this issue a subject of state-to-state relations might have an adverse effect on emigration from the U.S.S.R. as well as jeopardize the basic relationship which had made the steadily rising emigration

We were convinced that our most effective means for exerting beneficial influence was by working for a broad improvement in relations and dealing with emigration by informal means.

It is difficult, of course, to know the precise causes for changes in emigration rates. We know that during the period of improving relations and quiet representations, it rose from 400 in 1968 to about 33,500 in 1973. We believe that increase as well as recent favorable actions on longstanding hardship cases was due at least in part to what we had done privately and unobtrusively. We are also convinced that these methods led to the suspension of the emigration tax in 1973. We can only speculate whether the decline by about 40 percent in 1974 was the result of decisions of potential applicants or whether it was also affected by the administration's inability to live up to the terms of the trade agreement we had negotiated with the Soviet Union in 1972.

Nevertheless, we were aware that substantial opinion in the Congress favored a different approach. We recognized that if our government was to be equipped with the necessary means for conducting an effective foreign policy it would be necessary to deal with the emigration issue in the trade bill. As I stated in my previous testimony before this committee, we regard mutually beneficial economic contact with the U.S.S.R. as an important element in our overall effort to develop incentives for responsible and restrained international conduct.

I therefore remained in close contact with leaders of the Congress in an effort to find a means of reconciling the different points of view. I remember that I was urged to do so by several members of this committee when I testified before you on March 7 of this year. Shortly afterwards, I began meeting regularly with Senators Jackson, Ribicoff, and Javits to see whether a compromise was possible on the basis of assurances that did not reflect formal governmental commitments but nevertheless met widespread humanitarian concerns.

We had, as you know, been told repeatedly

of emigration a matter of its own domestic legislation and practices not subject to international negotiation. With this as a background, I must state flatly that if I were to assert here that a formal agreement on emigration from the U.S.S.R. exists between our governments, that statement would immediately be repudiated by the Soviet Government.

In early April, the three Senators agreed to an approach in which I would attempt to obtain clarifications of Soviet domestic practices from Soviet leaders. These explanations could then be transmitted to them in the form of a letter behind which our government would stand.

My point of departure was statements by General Secretary Brezhnev during his visit to the United States in 1973 to both our executive and Members of Congress to the effect that Soviet domestic law and practice placed no obstacles in the way of emigration. In conversations with Foreign Minister Gromyko in Geneva in April, in Cyprus in May, and in Moscow in July, we sought to clarify Soviet emigration practices and Soviet intentions with respect to them. It was in these discussions that information was obtained which subsequently formed the basis of the correspondence with Senator Jackson, with which you are familiar.

In particular, we were assured that Soviet law and practice placed no unreasonable impediments in the way of persons wishing to apply for emigration; that all who wished to emigrate would be permitted to do so except for those holding security clearances; that there would be no harassment or punishment of those who applied for emigration; that there would be no discriminatory criteria applied to applicants for emigration; and that the so-called emigration tax, which was suspended in 1973, would remain suspended.

It was consistently made clear to us that Soviet explanations applied to the definition of criteria and did not represent a commitment as to numbers. If any number was used in regard to Soviet emigration this would be wholly our responsibility; that is, the Soviet Government could not be held

accountable for or bound by any such figure. This point has been consistently made clear to Members of Congress with whom we have dealt.

Finally, the discussions with Soviet leaders indicated that we would have an opportunity to raise informally with Soviet authorities any indication we might have that emigration was in fact being interfered with or that applicants for emigration were being subjected to harassment or punitive action.

The points I have just cited have always been the basis for my contacts with Senators Jackson, Javits, and Ribicoff. I may add that these points have been reiterated to us by Soviet leaders on several occasions, including in President Ford's initial contacts with Soviet representatives and most recently at Vladivostok.

All these clarifications were conveyed to the three Senators and eventually led to the drafting of the exchange of correspondence published by Senator Jackson on October 18. The process took much time, however, because of the administration's concern that there be no misleading inference—specifically that there be no claim to commitments either in form or substance which in fact had not been made.

Within a week of being sworn in, President Ford took a direct and personal interest in settling the issues yet outstanding. He met or had direct contact with the three Senators (as well as with you, Mr. Chairman) on several occasions. He discussed the subject with leading Soviet officials. These contacts and conversations eventually resulted in the drafting of two letters, one from me to Senator Jackson and one from the Senator to me. The first of these letters contains the sum total of the assurances which the administration felt in a position to make on the basis of discussions with Soviet representatives. The second letter contained certain interpretations and elaborations by Senator Jackson which were never stated to us by Soviet officials. They will, however, as my letter to Senator Jackson indicated, be among the considerations which the President will apply in judging Soviet performance when he makes his determina-

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tion on whether to continue the measures provided for in the trade bill; i.e., extension of governmental credit facilities and of most-favored-nation (MFN) treatment. We recognize of course that these same points may be applied by the Congress in reaching its own decisions under the procedures to be provided in the trade bill.

With the exchange of correspondence agreed, it became possible to work out a set of procedures—which, I understand, has now been offered as Senate amendment 2000—whereby the President will be authorized to waive the provisions of the original Jackson-Vanik amendment and to proceed with the granting of MFN and Eximbank [Export-Import Bank] facilities for at least an initial period of 18 months. These procedures will also provide for means whereby the initial grants can be continued for additional one-year periods.

Thus, Mr. Chairman, I believe a satisfactory compromise was achieved on an unprecedented and extraordinarily sensitive set of issues. I cannot give you any assurance concerning the precise emigration rate that may result, assuming that the trade bill is passed and MFN is extended to the U.S.S.R. As I noted earlier, it is difficult to know fully the causes of past changes in Soviet emigration rates. However, I do believe that we have every right to expect, as my letter to Senator Jackson said, that the emigration rate will correspond to the number of applicants and that there will be no interference with applications. If some of the current estimates about potential applicants are correct, this should lead to an increase in emigration.

I believe it is now essential to let the provisions and understandings of the compromise proceed in practice. I am convinced that additional public commentary, or continued claims that this or that protagonist has won, can only jeopardize the results we all seek. We should not delude ourselves that the commercial measures to be authorized by the trade bill will lead a powerful state like the Soviet Union to be indifferent to constant and demonstrative efforts to picture it as yielding in the face of external pressure; nor

can we expect extended debates of domestic Soviet practices by responsible U.S. public figures and officials to remain indefinitely without reaction. We should keep in mind that the ultimate victims of such claims will be those whom all of us are trying to help.

Therefore I respectfully ask that your questions take account of the sensitivity of the issues. There will be ample opportunity to test in practice what has been set down on paper and to debate these matters again when the time for stocktaking foreseen in the legislation comes. With this caveat, I shall of course answer your questions to the best of my ability.

As I indicated to this committee in March, we seek improved relations with the Soviet Union because in the nuclear age we and the Soviets have an overriding obligation to reduce the likelihood of confrontation. We have profound differences with the Soviet Union, and it is these very differences which compel any responsible administration to make a major effort to create a more constructive relationship. In pursuing this policy, we are mindful that the benefits must be mutual and that our national security must be protected. With respect to title IV of the trade reform bill, we believe we are now in a position to meet these vital concerns adequately while at the same time bringing important economic and political benefits to the United States.

KISSINGER INTERVIEW WITH NEWSWEEK

DECEMBER 30, 1974

*Q. The Soviets have issued a statement that they are not going to make any guarantees about Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union. Does this statement and its possible impact on the trade bill concern you?*

*A. Yes, it concerns me. Certainly there is no one in Washington who has not heard me warn about this for years. Without saying anything, without making any claims for it, we managed to increase Jewish emigration from 400 a year in 1968 to 35,000 before any of this debate started. We had managed to intercede quietly in behalf of a list of hardship cases, of which more than half were dealt with successfully. We never claimed a success; we never took credit for it. We never said this was a result of détente. We just encouraged it to happen. We have warned constantly not to make this an issue of state-to-state relations, because we were afraid it would lead to a formal confrontation and defeat the objective of promot-*

*ing emigration. Despite our deep misgivings, we acquiesced when statements were made by some which implied that the Soviet Union had yielded to pressure, because we thought it was the result that was important, and we wanted to avoid a domestic debate that might have jeopardized the trade bill.*

*The issue of Jewish emigration is above all a human problem. There is no legal agreement we can make with the Soviet Union that we can enforce. Whether the Soviet Union permits emigration depends on the importance they attach to their relationship with the United States and, therefore, on the whole context of the East-West relationship.*

*If we can maintain a Soviet commitment to détente and if we can make clear that this is related to the emigration question, existing understandings will have a chance. But what we have had is, first, excessive claims. And now the Export-Import Bank bill has been encumbered with amendments that, to all practical purposes, virtually prevent loans of any substantial size to the Soviet Union.*

*Loans are more important to the Soviet Union than most-favored-nation status, and in this respect the Soviets are worse off now, after three years of détente and even after increased Jewish emigration, than they were to begin with. We cannot simply keep saying that the Soviets must pay something for détente, and then not provide anything from our side to give them an interest in its continuance.*

January 3, 1975 - President Ford's Remarks at the White House at the Trade Bill Signing Ceremony

This is an important part of our commercial and overall relations with Communist countries. Many of the act's provisions in this area are very complex and may well prove difficult to implement. I will, of course, abide by the terms of the act, but I must express my reservations about the wisdom of legislative language that can only be seen as objectionable and discriminatory by other sovereign nations...

As I have indicated, this act contains certain provisions to which we have some objection and others which vary somewhat from the language we might have preferred. In the spirit of cooperation, spirit or cooperation with the Congress, I will do my best to work out any necessary accommodations...